

## The Bulletin's Daily Story.

The Master  
of  
forgetting

By Howard Fielding

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HE was a pretty girl of a startlingly composite style, with coral-colored hair and dark eyes—rapid, restless eyes, with long black lashes. Her complexion was a fair young man of a ruddy blond type. He had an honest, bold face, and yet he looked worried, and there was a suggestion of furtiveness, almost of shame, in his expression.

They were standing upon a street corner in the little university town and seemed to be waiting for a trolley car. That was my own business at the moment, and I paused just beyond hearing of their conversation, which seemed to be in earnest. I caught a word or two in spite of myself, but not the meaning. They were a notable couple, and while I did not stare at them I did not turn my back.

I was a stranger in the place, and my clothes had been made by a good tailor in the city, so I was not surprised to receive a rapid, critical glance from the young woman. I was, however, somewhat startled by a second glance, and when I got a third the situation began to have a distinct and unmistakable character.

I am cursed with a romantic nature, but experience has taught me that when a strange young woman tries to flirt with me behind the back of an honorable escort she is more romantic than I am, and an acquaintance between us will not end happily. I immediately became interested in an old stone church on the other side of the street. It was not a beautiful object, but it looked safe.

Two minutes later a car came along, and I got aboard. The young man followed me, and he waved his hand affectionately to the girl, who remained upon the sidewalk. She made a quick and clever little gesture which might or might not be construed as throwing a kiss.

When we reached the college grounds I left the car, the young man still at my heels. He followed me almost to the door of University hall and then turned toward the terrace. I watched him covertly until he stopped by the granite wall and bowed his head to the breeze while he looked out across the valley.

My errand was with Professor Sumner, and I was shown into his room, which occupies a corner of the great gray building upon the ground floor. He is a heavy man of middle height, with a strong neck and a big head that looks as if it might be full of hard-working brains. His hair is iron gray, and his beard and mustache are almost white. He is an American of long descent, but was a student in Germany for so many years that he speaks our language with a slight accent.

I gave him my letter of introduction from a friend in the city, and though it filled a page he read it at a glance. I had almost said at a gulp, for he has a way of tossing his head forward and tossing it back as if he seized a subject with his teeth and hurriedly swallowed it.

"You want to make an article about hypnotism," said he. "Do you know anything about it?"

"No," said I.

"Why didn't your editor send a man who did know something about it?" he demanded.

"Because he wanted your views undisturbed," I replied.

"Good," said he, swallowing my remark with a relish. "If that is what you want, I will give you a lesson."

"You have called me an honest man," said he, stopping suddenly. "I think I am too honest for my own good, surely for my own happiness. I have a horror of deception—an unusual horror of it."

"So have I," responded the professor. "We should be friends, but you did not come here to tell me that."

"I will speak straight out," said the visitor in a voice which indicated that nothing could have been harder for him. "I am in love with a pure and admirable woman. She is not an angel. I suppose she has her little faults and weaknesses like the rest of humanity. I could hardly wish her to be otherwise. And it is the more unjust in me on that account to remain and to brood upon the memory of one slight error, but I can't help it. The thing is ruining my life."

"So I perceive," responded Sumner. "What did she do?"

"It was a trifling deception, a bit of thoughtlessness," continued the young man. "I am not a resident of this town, though I live not far away. You will make no attempt to identify me or the young lady?"

"Trust me," said Sumner. "I live the life of a monk in these stone walls."

"There was a man, somewhat older than myself," said the visitor, "with whom this young lady—"

"We will call her Miss A,"

"Very well—with whom Miss A. had been acquainted since she was a little girl. He is a very handsome fellow, but he lacks principle. I think Miss A's influence upon him was good, in spite of the difference in their ages."

"We will call him Mr. B," said the professor.

"Mr. B. lived in the same town as myself," continued the visitor. "He married a young woman of some means, but not from mercenary motives. It was an excellent match and I don't see why they shouldn't be very

happy; but there is no mention that Mrs. B. is of a jealous disposition. I have seen it exhibited, in fact, I saw it once in the case of Miss A, and in all honesty I can say that there was no justification that I could discover. Miss A. had merely written a note asking Mr. B. whether he was to attend a certain dining party."

"The result was most unfortunate. There was no open quarrel. Miss A. and Mrs. B. continued upon friendly terms, as they had been all their lives. But a break had been threatened and to avoid such a danger in the future Miss A. took the very unwise course of concealing a perfectly harmless little correspondence with Mr. B. They were members of many clubs and societies, and it was necessary they should communicate with each other. Of course this communication should have been perfectly open, or it should not have existed; but, unfortunately, they did not see the matter so clearly."

"How did they manage it?" asked the professor, and I could hear the visitor's feet shuffling nervously on the floor before he replied.

"After A. used to leave notes at his house," said he, in the voice of one confessing a black crime of his own. "Of course, I am giving you the worst possible view of this affair. Really there could not be anything more innocent in intent than this. Miss A. left the notes under a book on a table. To make matters worse," he added, laughing nervously, "it was an old family Bible. Miss A. and I went driving a good deal at that time, and we used to stop at the B's."

"Did you know she left the notes?" asked the professor.

"Certainly not," was the reply. "When I accidentally discovered that I was much grieved, and though my acquaintance with Miss A. was hardly close enough to warrant me in criticizing her conduct, I was forced by a sense of duty to do so."

"Tell her to stop," said the professor, finishing the sentence. "Did she do it?"

"Can you see that you are condemning her unjustly?" said the young man in a rather high key. "You blame her unnecessarily."

"Set in the least," protested the professor. "I am merely trying to get the view of the affair which you find the most painful. Did she stop?"

"The dot, but I regret to say—"

"That she didn't stop until you had caught her again?"

"Something of the kind," was the reply. "But there were excuses. You do not understand. She is a most honest, honest, noble impulse. It was quite contrary to her nature. But it does hurt me to think that she deceived me. Believable! It's all over. The B's moved to Chicago about a year ago. And Margaret—Miss A.—and I have grown closer together. I have learned to esteem her more highly, to know her better. Why can't I forget this thing? It's because I am crazy on the subject. I have twisted it in with bits of letters and jealous gossip until my whole life is ruined by it. I am letting my happiness slip by in miserable, cowardly indecision. This doubt of her, that is no better than a treason, poisons the air I breathe. It ruins my life."

"Are you under any pledge to the young lady?"

"No," was the reply; "but, unless I flatter myself too highly, I may be today. I am going to ask her to marry me. I have good hope, and I would like to begin a new life—I would like to be happy. For her sake, think of it. I have plenty of money. I am free. We might see the world together and be the happiest people in it."

I shuddered involuntarily, and the legs of my chair rattled on the floor, and the professor's face reddened to the nose.

"I will do what I can for you," said he. "I understand the case thoroughly. As a man of the world, as one who has seen much of life before he came to this academy, I offer you my help. Sit here."

I heard the whir of the revolving mirror, and my head stood still. Would Sumner take away from this young man the one memory that could save him from destruction?

Suddenly I heard the professor's voice, but so changed as to be hardly recognizable. It was not loud, but it was keen as a knife.

"You will think of the right name of this young woman whom we have called Miss A.," said he. "You will not speak it, however. Think of her intently and remember what I tell you: You do not love her. You know her to be a deceitful and dishonest woman, who has false to her friends, to you and to every right principle. You will never ask her to marry you. If she ever needs your help you will give it because you loved her once. But you do not love her, you cannot trust her. She would drag you down and ruin you; you could never lift her up. That is the law. And you will forget that I have told you this. You will think that I came up naturally in your heart, for that is best. You will leave this room immediately and forget that you have ever seen me or Wake!"

I heard him rise and stagger to the door without a word. It closed behind him, and amidst all this instant the professor drew away the screen.

"It was somewhat confidential," said he. "I think perhaps you would better—"

"There is no need," said I. "I know it before."

"You know the woman?"

"I have seen her once," I replied. "It was enough."

Half an hour later when I left the building the tall young man was standing upon the terrace. I walked that way and passed beside him.

"It is a grand view from this spot," said I.

"The air is so pure today," he replied. "It is refreshing and very different. I feel as if my soul had bathed in this white sunlight and was clean. I beg your pardon for my enthusiasm," he added.

"Are you connected with the university?"

"No," I replied. "I have been called upon Professor Sumner."

"A very remarkable man, I am told," said he. "I have never had the pleasure of meeting him."

"He is a very handsome fellow, but he lacks principle. I think Miss A's influence upon him was good, in spite of the difference in their ages."

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